

Contract No.: 278-C-00-02-00210-00

Contractor Name: Chemonics International, Inc.

USAID Cognizant Technical Office: Office of Economic Opportunities  
USAID Jordan

Date of Report: April 2005

Document Title: National Council for Education and  
Training in Tourism  
*Final Report*

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Activity Title and Number: Achievement of Market-Friendly  
Initiatives and Results Program  
(AMIR Program)  
Develop a blue print for the Tourism HRD  
Center & support the NTS Implementation  
Retreat  
ECI Component 7262.4

## **National Council for Education and Training in Tourism**

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This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by consultants and/or subcontractors in collaboration with Chemonics International Inc.

## **Outline Position Paper**

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this position paper is to outline the rationale for a National Council for Education and Training in Tourism. at Amman, Jordan. The Council is seen as a vital component in the development of a sustainable and vibrant tourism industry in Jordan. The Jordanian tourism industry has suffered in recent years due to a number of factors, however, the industry has shown an impressive resilience in the context of a difficult environment and some sectors of the business have grown over the past few years.

This paper sets out the case for the NCETT. It argues that such a development will allow the industry to be in a strong competitive position when the international tourism market improves and the industry will be able to profit and grow once the inevitable recovery occurs. While there are many positive aspects to the structure of the industry, the expert report on “Manpower Training and Education Survey of the Jordan Tourism Industry” also highlighted some deficiencies. The sub-strategy on HRD for Tourism sets out some of the challenges facing the Industry in Jordan and outlines a number of solutions, which include the development of a dedicated HRD Entity for the Country. This will also be an essential pillar of support to the industry by addressing some of the shortcomings of the manpower structure of the business. It will be a key element of any strategy to develop both the training and education strategies and practices for the industry.

The Council will also be a catalyst for professional development. It will provide a series of programmes specifically tailored to meet the needs of the industry. It will help to provide focus to the disparate providers of tourism education through a system of awards and recognition. It will set out the criteria for such awards and thus will help to provide a proper career structure within the industry. The facilitation of training networks within the sector and a more collaborative approach to development will be an important aspect of the centre’s remit. Through these initiatives the Council will act as a mechanism to coordinate training and development and ensure that the industry continues to develop in a measured way.

### **2. The Context of the Jordanian Tourism Industry**

In recent years tourism has experienced a difficult period in Jordan. International Tourism is also experiencing change with trends emerging that will alter the nature of the product being offered. For example, there is an increase in shorter but more frequent trips, customers book later, the role of the travel agent is diminishing as many people book their own holidays and tourists demand a more tailored holiday experience.

Given the nature of the geopolitical environment in the region it is still proving difficult to attract international tourism. However, this situation will not persist and there will be an inevitable recovery. It is essential that when the recovery does occur that the Jordanian tourism industry be well placed to take advantage of new opportunities. In order to maximise any potential upturn in business there needs to be an investment in human capital currently so that the appropriate resources are deployed and in place. An appropriately educated workforce cannot be sourced at short notice and it takes many years for a suitably qualified workforce to emerge. In order for this to happen it is necessary to invest now in facilities and training. The proposed Council for Education and training in Tourism will be the catalyst to develop training and education in Jordan. It is through the work of the Council that the Industry will be able to recover its position as a major Tourism player in the region. At this juncture it is necessary to leverage this strategy through Education training and Development...

Tourism can be a significant contributor to an economy but it can also be an exacting business. Reputation and image are important factors and often it is word of mouth that can be the best form of advertising. A key aspect of any holiday experience is the ease of interaction with the staff and management of tourism operations. Proper training and development, attention to customer service and the implementation of best practice are key aspects of a human resource development programme. Once these items are in place then there is a significant likelihood that the holiday experience will be much more enjoyable and the knock-on publicity will in itself generate a greater level of activity in the industry.

### **3. Current Structure of the Tourism Industry**

In the report on “Manpower Training and Education Survey of the Jordan Tourism Industry” there were many positive factors highlighted in relation to the employment structure of the Industry. The industry is one of Jordan’s major employers and even in difficult times has shown enormous robustness with an estimated 7% increase in the level of employment. Significantly employment in the industry does not suffer greatly from seasonal factors with 90% of total employment being permanent. This helps in increasing the attractiveness of the industry to potential employees. The market for labour is also competitive and the ability of the industry to attract the best people will in itself help the tourism sector to develop and prosper. A properly defined career structure, appropriately resourced training & development programmes and a challenging & rewarding work environment will help to attract the best people to the industry. The NCETT will play a vital role in this regard. Training and development programmes can be coordinated thus raising the standard of qualification within the industry. Through a process of qualification and awards a more defined career structure will emerge in the sector that will then impact on the level of reward available to workers.

The expert report on the industry also highlighted some deficiencies. There was a lack of formal training and while recruitment was not a problem many employers did find that the non-availability of trained staff was a major difficulty. Industry participants also stressed the need for training in a number of key areas; communication skills, customer care, supervisory management and sales techniques. The Council will help to address these issues through the provision of programmes and courses for employees and management to meet the needs of the industry. While it is evident that there is a training deficit in the industry, it is not an insurmountable problem. However, if the problem is ignored it could damage the industry and reduce its potential to grow and prosper. The Council will part of any strategy aimed at solving the training and skills issues in the industry.

#### 4. Tourism Manpower Strategy

The expert report on “Manpower Training and Education Survey of the Jordan Tourism Industry” also advised that a tourism manpower strategy should be put in place. A number of attributes of such a strategy were put forward by the expert group. Subsequently, a Tourism Human Resource Development Strategy Implementation position paper was authored by Professor Joseph Ruddy. The paper recommended that the Centre should be a National Entity for the entire country, with a strong regional identity. The Entity will address three distinct, though interdependent, strategic priorities;

- 1.) ***Becoming an employer of choice*** through an integrated marketing program developed on a foundation of a demonstrable, distinctive and competitive career offering;
- 2.) ***Attaining international standard service*** through the adoption of best practice human resource management and operations management;
- 3.) ***Bridging the skills gap*** within the industry through the development of regional and international competitive certified training.

The focus of the Centre will be in developing a competitive labor force in the tourism industry through:

- 1) supporting the development of professional career paths
- 2) positioning the industry as a highly attractive career choice
- 3) providing a focus for leading and influencing the education and training policy and practices
- 4) managing the delivery of training programs for existing employees
- 5) promoting training networks of tourism businesses
- 6) operating a unit for industry research and data analysis

These objectives include the provision of a focus for leading and influencing the education and training policy of the industry, the delivery of training programmes suited to the needs of the industry, the promotion of training networks, the development of professional career paths and an increased emphasis on communication and customer care., The National Council for Education and Training in Tourism will be located within the campus of Jordan Hospitality and Tourism Education Company (formerly Ammon College).

and will play a central role in ensuring the nascent strategy is giving a concrete basis in reality.

## **5. Role and Activities of the Centre for Human Resource Development**

The exact nature of the role and activities of the Centre is still developing but a number of potential areas have been proposed. As the concept is currently evolving the items described below are to be viewed as neither final nor exhaustive. This paper is to act as a stimulus for debate, which it is hoped, will help to further define the exact role for the Council.

- It will act as a focus to the disparate providers of tourism education through a system of awards and recognition. One of the main findings of the expert group was that there were numerous colleges and universities all offering programmes in tourism education. This led to confusion among employers. Unless the status and credibility of education and training programmes is improved then students will not be prepared to undertake a course of study and employers will not be inclined to hire graduates. One of the first tasks of the new Council will be to provide an internationally recognised framework to the various programmes on offer. This will be achieved through an independent system of course validation, review and recognition that will be accountable and subject to international scrutiny. Once the industry is made aware of the system of accreditation then there will be a renewed emphasis placed on education. This will also help to ensure that there is a defined career structure within the business with education and training playing a central role in the characterisation of the career structure.
- A common characteristic of a well-developed profession is a system of continuing professional development. These are features of the more established professions; medicine, law and accounting. Creating a professional type structure to the industry will make it more attractive to new entrants, improve the product being offered and ultimately lead to an increase in tourist numbers. The NCETT will provide a suite of programmes of varying duration aimed at developing a system of continuing professional development. It is vital that these programmes are developed with the needs of the industry in mind. For example, many of the programmes will be of shorter duration in order to fit in with the smooth running of a tourism business. The report on “Manpower Training and Education Survey of the Jordan Tourism Industry”

found that there was a low level of formal training and education within the industry. There is an urgent need to correct this deficit and a programme of continuing development would address this issue. According to the report there is a low priority on education and training within the industry, consequently there are large numbers of untrained staff in the business requiring specific skills training. Levels of professionalism must be enhanced and the status and esteem associated with working in the industry must be raised. Continuing professional development will help to provide this in a measured and progressive manner.

- International tourism is a competitive business and high yielding tourists are a demanding segment of the market. In order to ensure continuing and repeat business tourists need to be satisfied with their Jordanian experience. A means of achieving this is to have a workforce trained in current best practice. The levels of service that is demanded by the market is continually increasing and the only means of keeping up to date is to have a process whereby new trends can be monitored and then transferred to the Jordanian environment. The Council will carry out research to determine current and evolving best practice. This will then be implemented into courses and programmes with the needs of the Jordanian market in mind. The centre will provide guidelines for Best Practice through a series of publications and Standards of Procedures Manuals, so that the industry can stay at the forefront of worldwide developments. The Council will act as a diffuser of this knowledge so that the industry can develop with a sense of mutual purpose.
- The Council will also take full advantage of the significant potential of distance based e-learning programmes. Given the fragmented nature of the business and the small size of many of the tourism operators the formal educational environment may not be appropriate. A more tailored training experience is required. E-learning will allow participants to avail of educational opportunities with minimal impact on their businesses and working lives. The system is extremely flexible as learners can avail of the service irrespective of time and location. The medium of e-learning is perfectly suited to many of the initiatives discussed above; continuing professional development and the diffusion of best practice can also take place with an e-learning environment. The new centre will have the development of an e-learning programme as one of its principal aims.

- The report on “Manpower Training and Education Survey of the Jordan Tourism Industry” identified a number of areas where there was a need for training. Communication skills, customer care, supervisory management, professional skills, marketing techniques and training the trainer skills were all indicated as areas requiring further development. The NCETT will act as a co-ordinating and support body ensuring that these issues are addressed through courses and programmes certified and accredited. This will be an ongoing process. The Council will regularly take the pulse of the industry and then ensure that programmes and courses are updated to take account of the needs of the industry. By following this approach the tourism education sector can be secure in the knowledge that their programmes are current and meet the needs of the industry.
- NCETT will also foster a more collaborative approach to the development of the industry. Training networks, trade associations and clusters will be facilitated and encouraged. It will act as the enabler to bring different industry operators together. Initially it is envisaged that these networks will form marketing and training groups but there is a much wider scope for cooperation within the industry. By presenting a united and coordinated front to the market customers will have a lot more confidence in the product being offered. The internet and the World Wide Web also offers significant potential where a single portal can be used by the networks. This will help to generate business while at the same time reduce the large investment in technology that individual websites require. The Council will develop a model for the creation of these networks and help in the initial stages of their development.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper sets out the rationale for a Centre for Human Resource Development for the Jordanian tourism industry. It argues that tourism is an important contributor to the Jordanian economy and offers significant potential for expansion. This growth will not occur in itself and it needs to be nurtured and fostered. Part of that process is to ensure that staff are appropriately trained so that tourists remember their stay in Jordan for the right reasons. A Centre for Human Resource Development is a central element of this. Without an investment in training and development the industry will fail to reach its full potential.

The activities of the Centre will be many and varied. It will develop a system of continuing professional development to help raising current levels of training. It will identify current trends and best practice and ensure that best practice is incorporated into training programmes. It will develop a system of validation and accreditation of existing courses to provide a more transparent and coordinated approach for the existing educational providers. The centre will also set up distance based e-learning programmes bring training and development closer to the industry. Training and marketing networks will also be facilitated and enabled by the centre in an effort to develop a more collaborative approach to the industry.

The Centre offers many benefits. The key benefit however is that a professional workforce will be more aware of the needs of the tourist and will be in a much better position to meet both the quality and value needs of the modern discerning customer. Tourists who leave Jordan satisfied with their experience will return and, through word of mouth, bring others with them. Without the Centre Jordan risks falling behind its competition and not being in a position to take advantage of the inevitable improvement in tourism in the region when it arrives.